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AUTHOR Bertsche, Harriet; Silvestri, Holly
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ABSTRACT

A series of both daily classroom activities and a long-term assignment in which secondary school language students actively use the Internet and the World Wide Web are described. Class activities target each of three proficiency levels (beginner, intermediate, advanced). They include having students check the weather, check out major products/industries/monuments of a region or city, convert currencies, choose a hotel and place to visit, research a specific historical figure/author/cultural event, report on current events, and visit a city or museum. The longer-term assignment involves having students work in pairs to plan all the details of a trip to a French- or Spanish-speaking country. Specific aspects of this assignment are outlined. Web sites for both French and Spanish language sources are listed, and several search engines are suggested. (MSE)

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The Challenge of the Internet : Practical Applications in Your 7-12 Classroom

Harriet Bertsche
Holly Silvestri
Greenwich Academy

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Email us at:
Holly_Silvestri@ga.pvt.k12.ct.us
Harriet_Bertsche@ga.pvt.k12.ct.us

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Daily Activities

For all activities mentioned, depending on age and familiarity with the computer/internet, you may or may not chose to give the address of a particular site or of some search engines to help the students accomplish the given task.

1. Check the weather -

For beginner classes this can be done immediately after having reviewed the vocabulary and/or idiomatic expressions needed to deal with comprehending the weather report, either as a comprehension exercise or as an exercise in which they must somehow report back to the class on what they found.

For intermediate classes this can be used either as a comprehension exercise for review or as an exercise in which they must somehow report back to the class on what they found. It is especially nice at this level to use this to enrich the vocabulary of the students.

For advanced classes this exercise can be used alone or in a larger context. For example, you can ask the students at this level to not only report back on what they learned, but also to decide/argue in favor of or against going to the place on vacation that week, or even to make a list of what they would pack for that trip and why.

2. Check out the major products/industries/monuments of a region/city

For beginners this can be used as a way to reinforce vocabulary or as a segue to a culture unit. You may ask students to report back in written or oral form.

For intermediate classes this is an ideal way to introduce the class to a country. It is quite easy to divide the provinces/major cities up among the class members and have them be the "teachers" about that region.

For advanced classes, you can have students use the information obtained via the internet about a specific monument to write what

they will record on tape the following day for the Tourism Board. It is often fun to turn this exercise around and ask them to make a recording about a specific monument in the USA, but in French/Spanish.

3. Convert Currency

For beginners, this is a way to reinforce or even introduce the vocabulary associated with money, particularly the names of the currencies. You simply give them the names of one or several countries and ask them to find out the value of a dollar in those countries.

For intermediate classes you can use this and another site to help the students determine how long they could stay in a hotel in a certain place given X amount of dollars. The discussion afterwards could take many forms, i.e. do you need more money?, will you make adjustments in the hotel quality to stay longer and why/why not?, what is important to you - to go 1st class or to just go and why?, etc.

For advanced classes it is also a good idea to do the above activity. Another activity you can do is to compare different values of a dollar abroad and use this as a springboard for a discussion of what influences the value of money, or for a discussion of a "virtual class trip" which they must vote on at the end of class based only on the value of the dollar and other info that they may have regarding countries, cities, monuments to see, etc.

4. Choose a hotel and a place to visit

For beginners this could be limited to just choose a hotel in place X or not. They could be asked to report back on their choices with or without justification of said choices.

For intermediate classes this could be expanded to allow for a more complex description of the room/hotel and of the justification for their choices.

For advanced classes this could be turned around and they could be asked to write an ad or a mini travel brochure for the hotel or place of their choice.

5. Find out about "x" -- "x" could possibly be an historical figure, an author, a cultural event, anything...

For beginners this could consist of garnering just the basic facts (i.e. birth, death, etc. of a person or date of a cultural event, etc.) or something more complete like the entire list of the works of an author.

For intermediate and advanced classes this could be expanded to a long-term project or you could ask them to do a simple "search for everything you can find on X" exercise as a short-term exercise.

6. Current events report

For beginners this could consist of simply getting the headlines from a newspaper.

For intermediate classes this could consist of the same as the beginners activity only using several newspapers or it could consist of the students being asked to choose one article, print it out, and report back either in written or oral form. This need not be detailed, but the student should answer the main questions (i.e. who?, what?, when?, where?, why?).

For advanced classes the same activity as for the intermediate classes could be done or it could consist of simply getting the headlines from a variety of newspapers and then using them as a springboard for discussing the different things that make "news" in a country and why.

7. Visit a city or a museum

For beginners it is sometimes worthwhile just to "let them loose" in a site for a museum or city, just to see what they come back having remembered. If you are uncomfortable with this lack of structure, you can give them a simple task or a series of simple tasks that make them move around the site (i.e. find the hours the museum is open or find a map of the city subway).

For intermediate classes it is helpful to give them a series of specific tasks that range from simple to complex. For example, within a city site, you could ask for the hours a certain museum/monument

is open, the metro route from point A to point B, the restaurant that they would like to try when there, etc..

For advanced classes You can ask students to do the above tasks, and then report on them in the target language. They could, for example, find out about a museum, its current exhibits, and even some background on the artists in the exhibit, then tell the class about what they found, all in French or in Spanish.

Long-term Assignment

For this project you and a partner will plan all of the details of a trip to a French or Spanish speaking country. You will decide together where you will go, how much money you are going to spend, when you will leave and how long you will stay. Then you will use the internet to find out the information you need and "book" reservations.

1) Find out which airline you will fly based on timetables and prices. Choose the flight and "book" it.

2) Find out what visas, if any, you need, and any other legal documents, such as a drivers license.

3) Find out the exchange rate so that you will know how far your money will go.

4) Find a hotel that fits in with your budget. Your decision will also be based on where the hotel is located in the city and what amenities it has. "Book" it.

5) Rent a car if necessary.

6) Find out what the weather will be like during your trip and make a list of clothes to pack.

7) Decide what sightseeing you will do. Find out about museums, monuments, parks, and other interesting buildings.

8) Find out which cultural events will be going on in the city while you are there: Exhibits, opera, theatre, etc. Decide which ones you will see and when.

9) Decide at what restaurants you want to eat. Base your decision on location, price, and type of food.

10) Decide where you might shop and what products you would buy.

11) Plan your metro or bus routes from your hotel to sightseeing, shopping, restaurants.

After you have finished planning your whole trip, you will write up what you have decided to do. For each step, list the websites you have used to find your information. You will then report, in French/Spanish, to the class.

Foreign Language Websites

Sites for both French and Spanish

1. International Newspapers
www.potter.net/mediasite/international.html
Choose the continent, then go to the country and choose the paper you want to see. For Le Monde, choose "journal complet." For La Reforma, choose "exemplar de hoy."

Currency converters: (here are 2)
2. www.oanda.com/cgi-bin/ncc
3. www.myna.com/~cfeltham/money.htm
Convert dollars to currency of any country and vice versa

4. Travelocity
www.travelocity.com
This site gives complete airline timetables and information about hotels. You must register to use it, but it is free to register.

5. Lonely Planet
www.lonelyplanet.com/dest
Click on the continent and country of your choice. Gives history, geography, slides, attractions, travelers reports. Great site for all countries.

6. World Travel Guide
www.wtgonline.com
Click A to Z factfinder. Click on part of the world or the beginning letter of the country you want. Excellent variety of information.

7. Citynet
www.city.net
Great site for information on all countries and cities.

French

8. Paris Pages
www.paris.org
Complete guide to Paris. Click for the French version, or stay with the English. In the English version go to kiosque to find out what's happening in Paris. In the French version, go to Centre d'Acceuil. Has separate sections for the métro, monuments, museums, cafés, stores, restaurants, hotels, maps, etc.

9. http://pariscope.fr/Pariscope/
Weekly guide to all cultural events in the city.

10. France diplomacie
www.france.diplomacie.fr
In French, tourist info, history, geography

11. French language internet sites
www.trinity.edu/departments/modern_languages/french.htm
This is a good list of many different sites with dealing with French history, gastronomy, culture, art, and language.

12. http://hapax.besbc.edu
This is a great site with a variety of useful links to France including geography, gastronomy, humor and news.

13. www.meteo.fr
Click on "la météo du jour," then on "information pratique" to see a daily weather report. You can get much more detailed information for more advanced students. Can also be accessed in English.

14. Ministère de la Culture
www.culture.fr
This is the official site of the Ministry of Culture. Choose Découverte de la France for different kinds of current cultural discoveries and exhibitions/museums in France. Good for advanced students because it is only in French. A little esoteric, but a good challenge for older students.

15. CIA World Factbook Senegal
http:physig.ph.kcl.ac.uk/local/cia/1994/210.html
A good source of general information about Senegal.

Spanish

16. Softguide Madrid
www.softdoc.es
Subway map, information on art and culture, history and geography.

17. Prado Homepage
http://www.mcu.es/prado/index_eng.html
This page is in English. Click "Páginas en español" to see the Spanish homepage that is slightly different and a little harder to navigate.

18. All about Spain
www.red2000.com
General information about Spain. Also, information by region. A city guide, photo tour, information about bullfights and Flamenco dancing.

19. Hotel Search in Spain
www.hotelsearch.com
Where to find a hotel, with prices.

20. Discover Spain
http://194.224.61.247
Road maps, information on art, architecture, culture, cuisine, geography, history. Sections with info on each region of Spain.

21. Go Spain
www.go-spain.com
Information about visas, drivers licenses for foreigners, and other practical information for travelers.

22. Tour through Spain
www.tourspain.es
Where to stay, how to get there, sports, art, culture, cities. Large sections on the main cities. In English with pictures. Under each city there is tourist information--museums, events, getting around, etc.

23. www.andalucia.com
Lots of information on the region and the cities there.

24. Sí Spain
www.sispain.com
A fabulous site with everything about Spain. Choose English or Spanish.

Search Engines

Infoseek
www.infoseek.com

Altavista
www.altavista.com

Yahoo
www.yahoo.com

Hot Bot
www.hotbot.com

To search using a variety of search engines:
www.iias.com/websearch